

IN THE CLAIMS

1. (Currently amended) A system comprising:

a router having a first Local Area Network (LAN) interface for coupling to one or more general purpose computers located in a private home network, the router configured to perform address translation on packets exchanged between the general purpose computers located in the private home network and a wide area network;

the router having a home automation interface for coupling to one or more remote home appliances, the home automation interface separate from the LAN interface and configured to communicate with the remote home appliances using a home automation protocol;

~~one or more appliances coupled to the router independently of the computers;~~

the router configured to send one or more communications over the wide area network for logging into an instant messenger application as a client in response to receiving an event signal from one of the home appliances, the router logging into the instant messenger application as the client independently of the general purpose computers and regardless of whether all general purpose computers located in the private home network are deactivated and independently of the operational status of the computers;

the router configured to notify a user of the event signal using the instant messenger application; and

the router configured to control the appliance that sent the event signal according to [[a]] an instant message generated by the user and received from the instant messenger application over the wide area network.

2. (Currently amended) The system of claim 1 further comprising:

a home automation management apparatus system interface coupled to the router over the home automation interface a second interface of the router that is separate from the first interface; and

the router configured to use the home automation protocol to transmit a control signal to the home automation management apparatus system, the control signal for causing the home automation management apparatus to control for controlling the home appliance that sent the event signal.

3. (Currently amended) The system method of claim 1 wherein the home automation interface is an X10 interface and the home automation protocol is an X10 protocol further comprising:

the router configured to establish a security policy for creating a firewall between the private home network and the wide area network;

wherein the security policy is configured to allow the user to monitor and control the appliances from an endpoint located remotely with respect to the private home network.

4. (Currently amended) The system method of claim 1 ~~[[3]]~~ wherein the router controls a light fixture, a thermostat, an alarm system or a sprinkler system according to the instant message received from the instant messenger application.

5. (Currently amended) The system method of claim 1 wherein the router appears as an instant messenger friend on a graphical display on a remote endpoint located outside the private home network ~~for the user~~ after the router logs into the instant messenger application.

6. (Currently amended) The system method of claim 1 wherein the router is further configured to interpret pseudo-English commands included in the instant message received from the instant messenger application for controlling and control the home appliance that sent the event signal according to the interpreted pseudo-English commands.

7. (Cancelled)

8. (Currently amended) An apparatus comprising:
a network ~~first~~ interface coupled to one or more computers located in a first home network;
an appliance automation ~~a second~~ interface for coupling to at least one appliance, the appliance automation interface separate from the network interface located in a home associated with the first home network;

one or more processors; and

a memory coupled to the processors comprising instructions executable by the processors, the processors operable when executing the instructions to:

forward communications between the first ~~home~~ network and a second different network to provide the computers that are located in the first ~~home~~ network with access to the second network;

send signaling messages over the second network for logging into an instant messenger application ~~regardless of whether the computers are powered on and~~ in response to receiving an event signal received over the appliance automation ~~second~~ interface, the signaling messages sent independently of whether any computers located in the first network are powered on;

send one or more outgoing instant messages over the second network to notify a user of the event signal using the instant messenger application; and

control the appliance through the appliance automation ~~second~~ interface according to one or more incoming instant messages received over the second network.

9. (Previously presented) The apparatus of claim 8 wherein the processors are further operable to transmit the control signal to the appliance in accordance with a standardized home automation protocol.

10. (Currently amended) The apparatus of claim 8 wherein the processors are further operable to interface with the appliance via a remote home automation system interface unit configured to control the appliance, the interfacing conducted in accordance with a standardized home automation protocol.

11. (Previously presented) The apparatus of claim 10 wherein the home automation system interface unit is a transceiver configured to control the appliance.

12. (Cancelled)

13. (Cancelled)

14. (Currently amended) The apparatus of claim 8 wherein the processors are further operable to communicate with the appliance over the appliance automation interface using an X10 protocol.~~[[:]~~

~~maintain a firewall between the first and second networks; and~~

~~transmit the outgoing messages to the instant messenger application through the firewall.~~

15. (Currently amended) A system comprising:

means for transferring communications using a network interface of a router, the communications transferred between a first network and a second network to provide one or more computers located in the first network with access to the second network;

means for logging the router into an instant messenger application server by sending login messages over the second network ~~independently of the computers~~; and

means for controlling an appliance using the router by sending control signals over an appliance automation interface of the router, the control signals configured according to incoming messages that are both received over the second network and generated by a user in communication with the instant messenger application server.

16. (Currently amended) The system of claim 15 wherein the control signals are sent ~~means for controlling the appliance is configured to transmit a control signal to the appliance~~ in accordance with a standardized home automation protocol interface.

17. (Currently amended) The system of claim 15 further comprising:

means for communicating interfacing with the appliance via a home automation system interface unit configured to control a plurality of appliances, ~~the interfacing means compatible with a standardized home automation interface.~~

18. (Previously presented) The system of claim 17 wherein the home automation system interface unit is a transceiver configured to control the plurality of appliances.

19. (Currently amended) The system of claim 15 wherein the router functions as an instant messenger client when receiving the incoming messages, further comprising:

means of functioning as an instant messenger client of the instant messaging server to receive the incoming messages.

20. (Cancelled)

21. (Cancelled)

22. (Currently amended) The system of claim 15 wherein the first network is a private home network and the second network is a wide area network ~~the Internet~~.

23. (Currently amended) A method comprising:
~~transferring~~ forwarding communications between a first network and a second network to provide one or more computers located in the first network with access to the second network, said communications forwarded using a router;

sending login messages over the second network to an instant messenger application server, said login messages sent using the router, said sending of the login messages occurring independently of the operational status of all computers located in the first network ~~the computers~~;

controlling an appliance ~~independently of the computers~~ according to one or more incoming messages received by the router over the second network, the appliance controlled using the router and without using any of the computers located in the first network.

24. (Currently amended) The method of claim 23 further comprising:
controlling the appliance through a standardized home automation interface of the router.

25. (Currently amended) The method of claim 23 further comprising:
interfacing with the appliance via a home automation system interface unit configured to control a plurality of appliances, the interfacing conducted in accordance with a standardized home automation protocol interface.

26. (Previously presented) The method of claim 25 wherein the home automation system interface unit is a transceiver configured to control the plurality of appliances.

27. (Currently amended) The method [[a]] of claim 23 further comprising:
logging the router onto the instant messaging application server; and
wherein the incoming messages are instant messages sent to the router functioning as an
~~instant messenger client to receive the incoming messages.~~

28. (Cancelled)

29. (Cancelled)